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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7694
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0740
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7729
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5910
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4258
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1844
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4263
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3359
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8337
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5828
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0540
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2618
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN THE NORTH

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Fighting between Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and LTTE forces has intensified, particularly in Mannar district.

On February 12, the LTTE attacked the Thallady brigade command center in Mannar district killing several soldiers and damaging a nearby church. On February 11, 10 government troops and 13 LTTE cadres were reportedly killed, as the army advanced from the Andankulam Forward Defense Line (FDL). Embassy contacts also reported heavy fighting in the eastern part of Jaffna on February 13. The LTTE appears to be putting up significant resistance, indicating that penetrating LTTE territory could be more difficult than the SLA anticipated. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On February 12, the LTTE attacked the Thallady brigade command center in Mannar district. Mannar Bishop Rayappu Joseph informed Embassy that nine shells had fallen into the Thallady camp, located adjacent to a local church. The Mannar Citizens Committee said the camp was burning, and small arms fire was heard. On February 13, the parish priest of the church told embassy that artillery shells had fallen into the church portico and damaged a portion of the church. Multiple Embassy contacts confirmed that six soldiers were killed in the attack and at least 10 were wounded. The LTTE claims 15 SLA soldiers were killed and 50 were wounded in the attack. The military claims that 48 LTTE cadres were killed in the clashes that followed.

¶3. (C) On February 11 in Welioya in the Northeast, ten government troops and 13 LTTE were reportedly killed as the army advanced from the Andankulam Forward Defense Line (FDL). Embassy contacts also reported heavy fighting in the eastern part of Jaffna on February 13.

¶4. (C) Defense journalist Iqbal Athas (protect) told Pol Chief that the SLA has been attempting a three-pronged attack on western, eastern, and northern Forward Defense Lines. Few of the SLA-LTTE confrontations have involved close contact. According to Athas, the SLA has suffered heavy casualties, an

average of 25 per day over the last seven months. SLA casualties are mostly from booby traps, landmines, artillery, and mortar fire. In the west, the SLA has been trying to take Vidattaltivu and Madhu since July 2007. However, the SLA has not achieved its objectives, which lie only about 15 kilometers within LTTE territory. In the east, the SLA augmented its original two battalions by withdrawing army units from the east (Thoppigala, which was the LTTE's last stronghold in the east), northwest (Habarana), and center (Wilpattu). In the north, at least 4,000 soldiers reportedly have been involved in repeated, unsuccessful attempts to take the Tiger forward positions on the Jaffna FDL.

15. (C) COMMENT: The government continues to pursue its military objectives by attacking LTTE positions on the west, east and north fronts of the FDL. However, the LTTE appears to be putting up significant resistance, indicating that penetrating LTTE territory could be more difficult than the SLA anticipated.

BLAKE